

# **Corps Connection**

ALABAMA  
citizen★corps

A Monthly Publication for Alabama Citizen Corps Councils, their Partners and Affiliates

**Summer 2007**

Alabama Citizen Corps is a program of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

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Bob Riley, Governor

Sydney Hoffman, Executive Director

## **A New Frontier in Volunteer Management : The Volunteer Institute**

Throughout the months of April and May, the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI) hosted seven Volunteer Institutes across Alabama in fulfillment of its mission to prepare the state for times of disaster. The Volunteer Institutes



Alison Welty and Johnny Langley of the Lee County EMA participating in the VRC Exercise at the Volunteer Institute in Opelika.

were made possible by a grant from the Points of Light Foundation (POLF) and the National Citizen Corps Council to efficiently utilize the energy of disaster volunteers.

The trainings began with an introduction to disaster, including the four phases of disaster, the importance of local relationships and planning in disaster preparedness and response, and disaster terminology. Spontaneous Volunteer Management through the utilization of a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) served as the training's primary focus. Attendees learned about the positive and negative aspects of spontaneous volunteers, highlighting the possibility for positive outcomes, as well as

the possibility of a "disaster within a disaster." In addition, community stakeholders in volunteer management were also discussed as ways to establish a network *before* a disaster strikes, to avoid unnecessary chaos after a disaster. Other important issues, such as legal liability and public relations, were also discussed.



Attendees register and interview volunteers who come into the simulated volunteer reception center.

For many of the attendees, the most exciting part was the chance to put their newfound knowledge to work through the volunteer reception center exercise. The training room was transformed into a volunteer reception center in the midst of a major disaster. Each of the attendees was assigned a specific role dealing with spontaneous volunteers, ranging from registration to the safety briefing. By enabling the attendees to experience the VRC for themselves, they were able to learn its essential operations.

The Volunteer Institute trainers conveyed the importance of volunteers and preparedness in disasters. The trainers, including Mary K.

Braddock, Director of the Volunteer Center of Morgan County, Penny Dendy, Director of Volunteer Mobile, and Sheila McFerran, Director of the Volunteer Center of Madison County, brought a wealth of knowledge through their first hand experience working with volunteers.

There were a wide range of attendees including local Emergency Management , Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers, National Service Partners (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps) and faith and community-based disaster relief teams. Many of the attendees had experience in disaster response, and were able to share their stories and promising practices. Individuals from the local government, faith-based groups, and the non-profit and private sectors were able to network and begin the establishment of future alliances that will prove to be vital in future disaster response.



Attendees give out safety briefings and job assignments during the VRC exercise.

Thank you very much to all of those who are helping Alabama to be more prepared in times of disaster by attending the Volunteer Institute!

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## THE VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER IN ACTION: ENTERPRISE, ALABAMA

In conjunction with Volunteer Mobile and Lutheran Disaster Response, the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI) opened up a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) in Enterprise, Alabama, in response to the major tornado on March 1, 2007. Christ the King Lutheran Church became a bustling receiving area for thousands of unaffiliated volunteers that converged on the disaster site. The VRC was activated on Saturday, March 3,



Rebecca Tidwell from the Volunteer Center of Montgomery registers and gives out ID bracelets to volunteers at the VRC in Enterprise.

2007, two days after the disaster. Volunteers from Lutheran Disaster Response were the first to staff the centers, in addition to staff from the Volunteer Centers around the state. The City of Enterprise diverted all volunteers to the VRC in order to be briefed, trained, and deployed.

El Williams from Volunteer Mobile directed the VRC's operations, working with the VRC staff. He searched for volunteer opportunities, from feeding victims to debris removal. While the first few days were devoted to taking care of the immediate needs of the victims, such as sheltering and food, the later days concentrated on debris removal projects for the victims. All types of people arrived at the center,

from students affiliated with local schools and universities, congregants from local churches, people from businesses, and others were all very eager to help. Volunteers from Fort Rucker and Maxwell Air Force Base also proved to be a resource in the initial volunteer response to the Enterprise disaster.

Two weeks after the disaster, the VRC run by Volunteer Mobile and LDR closed its doors and left the responsibility of managing the volunteers behind with the Recovery Organization of Coffee County. The model used in Enterprise proved to be successful, as it placed over 2,000 volunteers around the community to help those affected by disaster.

Mark your calendars for.....

**BE READY SUNDAY**

**Sunday, September 30th, 2007**

Be Ready Sunday is an opportunity for Faith-Based groups in Alabama to obtain information about Congregational and individual disaster preparedness. Materials such as sample bulletins will be on our website, [www.ServeAlabama.gov](http://www.ServeAlabama.gov), in time for the upcoming 2007 hurricane season.



## Calhoun County Citizen Corps Council hosts Community Awareness Day

On April 21st, 2007, the Calhoun County Citizen Corps Council hosted a Community Awareness Day at Zinn Park in Anniston in order to reach out to those in their community about disaster preparedness. The Calhoun County EMA hosted their CERT team graduation, as well as honoring the amazing dedication of Hugh Smitherman, a 90 year old Civil Defense volunteer who founded Calhoun County's Civil Defense group in 1962.

## Alabama Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Second Annual Conference Tuesday, May 22, 2007

The second annual Alabama Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (ALVOAD) Conference was held Tuesday May 22, 2007 at Auburn University Montgomery. The aim of the conference was to bring together those that work or volunteer in disaster management at the local and state level and empower new ideas and efforts that make Alabama ready for a disaster. The conference hosted several speakers and break out sessions and numerous opportunities for networking.

Sydney Hoffman, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI), opened the event by speaking on *Volunteers in Alabama* followed by Jim Walker, Director of Alabama Department of Homeland Security (ADHS) who spoke on *Preparedness in Alabama*. The Pandemic Flu and the Response to the March 1<sup>st</sup> Tornadoes was also presented.

There were two opportunities to attend breakout sessions. The topics included: an introduction to the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS), Aidmatrix, establishing a VOAD, and creating a disaster plan for established VOADs. Other breakout sessions included learning all four phases of a disaster and volunteer reception centers. There were also a panel discussing collaboration between VOAD and Citizen Corps Councils on the state and local level. The conference was closed by Bruce Baughman, Director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), speaking on *Emergency Management in Alabama* and Clyde Pressley, Vice President of ALVOAD, discussing next steps and presenting a special award to Sheila McFerran of the Volunteer Center of Madison County.

Over 170 participants attended this year's conference. We hope to see you there next year!



## Give us something to work with.

The Alabama Citizen Corps Council is looking for articles, pictures, updates, lessons learned, tips, useful websites and events for this monthly newsletter. Please send any information on Citizen Corps, CERT, Volunteers in Police Service, Neighborhood Watch, Medical Reserve Corps, Fire Corps, or anything else of interest to Citizen Corps Councils to: Alison.Welty@ServeAlabama.gov. Submissions are due by the 15th of each month to be published in the following quarter's newsletter, space permitting.

### *Tips for Summer*



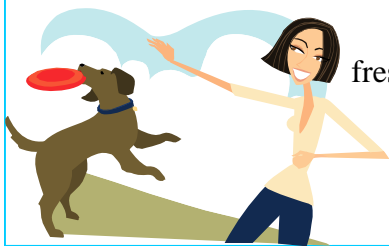
The Summer months are upon us and that means Sun, Surf and Sand!

As always one should be prepared for the many ups and downs of summer travel. To ensure a safe and fun holiday, follow the guidelines below:

~ Road-tripping? Make sure that your car is in top shape with an oil change, tire rotation and general check up. You'll save on gas and will prevent any serious damage to your car.

~ Flying to an exotic or not so exotic location? Double check your airline number and flight itinerary before you get to the airport. Be patient and follow the security guidelines to ensure a safe and speedy flight.

~ Headed to the beach or the lake? Don't forget the sunscreen and umbrella to protect you and your loved ones from the sun.



~ Traveling with your pets? Remember to provide plenty of fresh water and a chance to get out of the car on long road trips.

Happy Summer!

### **Send Us Your Feedback!**

Have suggestions or ideas for topics? Please send them to Kelly Dempsey at [Kelly.Dempsey@ServeAlabama.gov](mailto:Kelly.Dempsey@ServeAlabama.gov).